Matusow's Recantation in The Courts: A Strange Moral Standard, See Page 4

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Two Soviet Proposals With Constructive Possibilities Ignored

How the News Out of Geneva Is Being "Managed"

While a Congressional subcommittee in Washington opened hearings (see page two) on how the government "manages" the press, the Geneva conference provided vivid illustrations of the process at work. Two Soviet proposals with constructive possibilities were ignored; oversimplified views of Germany and the Middle East encouraged. In this the press generally was as much to blame as the government; the newspapers "raped awful easy."

Ignored: Molotov in a private talk with British Foreign Secretary Macmillan suggested a general Middle Eastern conference to deal with the Arab-Israeli crisis. This was reported from Geneva by Chalmers Roberts in the *Washington Post* of November 5 and again on November 6.

Ignored: After all the talk about "liberating" the East European satellites and the ballyhoo about Dulles' visit on the subject with Tito, not the slightest attention was paid to the political implications of a new proposal in the Soviet security plan for Europe. It takes an idea first put forward by Eden for a demilitarized zone between East and West, and gives it new dimensions. It suggests the creation of a "zone of limitation and inspection of armaments" which shall include the entire territory of both Eastern and Western Germany "and those of all or some neighboring states." Eastern Germany's neighbors are Poland and Czechoslovakia. This suggests Russia is ready to neutralize them if we agree to neutralize Germany. We ignore the proposal at our peril. For this is one of the ideas the West German government has also broached privately (see Bonn dispatch, London *Sunday Times* last May 8) and might some day negotiate with Moscow behind our backs.

If The Position Were Reversed

The American press has been the willing instrument of the State Department in selling the most ludicrously oversimplified view of Germany to the American public. We need only stop and ask ourselves one question to see how absurd our own position is. Would we agree to the reunification of Germany if Russia's condition were that the Reich be allowed to join the Warsaw pact against us? It is nonsense to say that all we insist on is a free choice for Germany. The new Western security proposals give the game away. Their guarantees go into effect only if a reunited Germany joins NATO.

We have come to think of world problems so largely in military terms and we are so fascinated by those 12 German divisions that we are in no mood to discuss any proposal if it does not put German soldiers into NATO ranks. From this fixation stemmed two of the moves made to falsify the news out of Geneva last week. One was Dulles' "off the record" plea to the press to interpret the situation as optimistically as possible; the main reason for this is that if the Germans become convinced that the deadlock is hopeless, a popular demand for direct negotiations with Moscow will be hard to resist. The other falsification was the agreed Western "line" to the press that the new Russian proposals on Germans meant its "communization."

The Soviet proposals are open to question on many points, notably their failure to allow for free elections. But the main idea, of a joint East-West German council to deal with common German problems, is logical in the absence of a general settlement and not too different in some respects from the ideas of the Social Democrats. The Germans will notice that the East Germans no longer demand parity of representation, and will be inclined to laugh at our notion that the rich and powerful West German Republic with its 50,000,000 people, can be "communized" by the East German regime with its 18,000,000, a majority of whom do not like their Communist rulers. To draw an analogy between this proposed Council and the Lublin government in postwar Poland is nonsense. Poland was occupied by the Red Army.

The Realities in The East

This same unwillingness to deal with reality also makes itself felt in the Middle Eastern crisis. How many Americans realize that this was brought about as much by our effort to play Iraq off against its rival Egypt as it was by Arab hostility to Israel? How many Americans realize that the Soviet arms deal with Egypt followed our action in linking Iran with the "northern tier" pact? How many American newspapers stop to consider that our reaction would be violent, too, if the Russians drew Mexico into an analogous anti-American alliance covering the Caribbean?

Eisenhower has issued an appeal from Denver to the Russians for peace in the Middle East. But can he appeal for peace and turn down a conference? Can we ask Russia to keep out of Egypt and still insist on drawing Iran completely into our own orbit? Peace is not a one-sided proposition. The U.S. can create it in the Middle East by a firm commitment to prevent any aggressive move to change Israeli-Arab boundaries; it can further peace by offering to put into effect the Dulles proposals of last August for resettlement and repatriation of Arab refugees on the basis of present boundaries; and it can negotiate a general stabilization in the area. The alternative is participation in an arms race which would impoverish the Middle East, Israeli and Arab, and tear it apart in a sullen duel between the two great powers.

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Subcommittee Opens Inquiry With A Field Day for Newspapermen

An Astringent Minority Opinion on What Ails Our Press

The main obstacle to the creation of a well-informed public is its own indifference. In every country with a free press, thoughtful papers which conscientiously try to cover the news lag behind the circulation of those which peddle sex and sensationalism. This is as true in Paris and London as in New York; and if Moscow ever permits a free privately owned press, *Izvestia* and *Pravda* will fall far behind any paper which prints the latest on that commissar's love-nest.

The second obstacle is that most papers are owned by men who are not newspapermen themselves; publishing is a business, not a Jeffersonian passion, and the main object is as much advertising revenue as possible. Thus it happens that between the attitude of the publishers and that of the public, most papers in this country print little news. And this, except for local coverage, is mostly canned, syndicated, and quick-frozen.

Why Write for the Spike?

The third obstacle is that this has always been and is now more than ever a conformist country; Main Street and Babbitt—and de Tocqueville long before Sinclair Lewis—held a faithful mirror to our true nature. It doesn't take much deviation from Rotary Club norms in the average American community to get oneself set down as queer, radical, and unreliable.

Against this background, it is easy to see why the average Washington correspondent is content to write what he is spoon fed by the government's press officers. Especially since the press is largely Republican and this is a Republican administration, there is little market for "exposing" the government. Why dig up a story which the desk back home will spike?

"Managing" the News

It was this astringent view of our profession and its circumstances which I found lacking in the newspapermen's testimony which opened the investigation launched here by a special House subcommittee on government "information." The most perceptive of the witnesses, and one of our very best reporters, James Reston of the *New York Times*, put his finger on the vital point when he said that worse than suppression was the "managing" of the news by government departments. But the news is "managed" because the reporters and their editors let themselves be managed.

The State Department is an outstanding offender. Very often, for example, newspaper readers get not so much what actually happened at the UN as the "slant" given out in the corridors afterward to the reporters by a State Department attache.

The private dinner, the special briefing, are all devices for "managing" the news, as are the special organizations of privileged citizens gathered in by State and Defense Departments for those sessions at which highly confidential (and one-sided) information is ladled out to a flattered "elite."

As a reporter who began by covering small towns, where one really has to dig for the news, I can testify that Washington is in many ways one of the easiest cities in the world to cover. The problem is the abundance of riches. It is true that the government, like every other government in the world, does its best to distort the news in its favor—but that only makes the job more interesting.

Correspondents Themselves Conformist

Most of my colleagues agree with the government and write the accepted thing because that is what they believe; they are indeed—with honorable exceptions—as suspicious of the non-conformist as any group in Kiwanis.

Though the first day's witnesses included the best and boldest of the regular press, no one mentioned the recent deportations of radical foreign language editors and of Cedric Belfrage of the *Guardian*. No one mentioned the Communist editors and reporters prosecuted—*for their ideas*—under the Smith Act. No one mentioned the way McCarthy "investigated" James Wechsler. Surely thoughtful men, as aroused as these were over the future of a free press, might have given a moment's consideration to the possible danger in such precedents. Did they feel it would be indiscreet to go beyond respectable limits? That such fundamental principles are best left for orations on Zenger and Lovejoy, both conveniently dead?

Yet having expressed these minority views I hasten to add that the testimony, the results of the committee's questionnaire and Allen Raymond's competent and comprehensive survey for the American Civil Liberties Union are a healthy protest against a growing secretiveness. The need to keep some few matters private has proliferated into 57 varieties of "classified" data. We will report on the investigation as it progresses.

The CIA and the Press: What to Do About Official Lying?

" . . . The news of the CIA [Central Intelligence Agency] and its operatives all over the world often confront us with the most embarrassment in that any reporter can be confronted with the dilemma as to whether he is going to tell the truth, or whether he is going to mislead the American people by putting out something put out by the government which he knows not to be truth. That whole area of the CIA, Mr. Chairman, I think is a growing problem for the press, and I would think it would merit some attention by your committee."

—James Reston of the N. Y. Times, before the House Government Information Subcommittee (official transcript).

Washington Editor Protests The Orwellian Curtain Descending on The News

"We find an example of this [withholding of information] in the directive of March 29, 1955 instructing information officers to put out only information that would 'constitute a constructive contribution to the primary mission of the Department of Defense.' What does 'constructive' mean? From the standpoint of an official in government we fear it might mean only information that would not embarrass officials. . . .

"Another example of this is the directive of September 16, 1955 advising defense contractors to release no information that might be 'of possible value to a potential enemy.' This is an effort to withhold not only public, but also private information, from the people, under a standard that is so vague as to be no standard whatever. All information is of 'possible value to a potential enemy'—the amount of rainfall, the state of the crops, the condition of the highways, the location of harbor channels—and a million other facts of daily life. They are all of some use to an enemy. They are . . . of even greater use to our own citizens who could not carry on their normal work without this information. This is a standard of secrecy to which no democratic people ought to consent. . . .

"We hope the time will never come when the situation in the world is so desperate that the only way we can prevent the Communists from destroying our free institutions will be to destroy them first ourselves. Certainly we do not believe that in the present hour we ought to tamely submit to a course of action that, in a military metaphor, we might call a 'scorched freedom' policy."

—J. R. Wiggins, executive editor, the Washington Post, before the House Government Information Subcommittee, Nov. 7

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Smiles Real or False in Geneva, But The Cold Shoulder Here

How Washington "Celebrated" the October Revolution

Whether the smiles in Geneva are real or synthetic, there is no doubt that the cold shoulder is still dominant—and genuine—in Washington. Practically the whole ruling group in the Soviet Union turned up at the Fourth of July reception in the U.S. Embassy at Moscow last summer, but not a single Cabinet officer appeared at the Soviet Embassy's annual reception last week on the anniversary of the October revolution, nor at the party the previous week for the Soviet pianist, Gilels. Justice Douglas filed a dissenting social opinion; he was the one member of the Supreme Court and the highest ranking American to attend both parties. Deputy Under Secretary Robert Murphy represented the State Department; he was one of the last to arrive, perhaps in the hope (disappointed) that the camera men would have left.

The social sensation was the appearance of the former Mrs. Joe Davies; the most interesting portent left of center, the fact that Michael Straight of *The New Republic* turned up. The American cold shoulder did not affect the rest of the diplomatic corps, which was represented to a man, including Israel and Egypt. Attendance was so much heavier than last year that the usually lavish buffet finally ran short. In some ways this annual party is unfortunate; everybody seems so frightfully hungry that Soviet economic observers may well be led to conclude that American capitalism is breaking down.

Softening The Blow

The Russians may easily take the social snub too seriously. They must consider that thanks to the loyalty-security mania many Washington personalities are nervous about being seen at the Soviet Embassy (just as Russians are, I am sure, about becoming too chummy with the U.S. Embassy in Moscow). There is balm also to be found in the President's greetings to Voroshilov, dictated in his sick room at Denver, and in Press Secretary Hagerty's announcement that to his knowledge this was the first time a President had sent greetings on the October Revolution. They may also take comfort in the statements made to the press by Defense Secretary Wilson at the Washington airport on his return from Geneva at the very time their big party was being held here. Wilson described the Russian leaders in friendly terms, favored another meeting "at the Summit" if necessary, hinted that some progress may be made on Germany "that will not be clear to everyone" and said (so few papers ran this that we give it in full), "There is something bigger than the Geneva spirit, because people in all countries hope that their leaders will be smart enough to insure that there will be no war." When a key official and big business man like Wilson speaks in these terms, the Russians and the rest of the world may feel sure that the desire for peace strikes important answering chords in Washington.

Century of Socialism?

Several newspapers, including the New York *Herald-Tribune* and the *Daily News*, were upset because Kaganovich in his speech at the anniversary celebration in Moscow, while stressing peace and co-existence, boasted that this was the century of "socialism and communism." This will only startle those who refuse to see. As compared with 50 years ago, every government in the world today is "socialistic." The erosion of absolute property rights, the growth of governmental power over the economy and the popularity of the welfare state are visible everywhere. War would only make the state as all-powerful in the "capitalist" countries as it already is in the communist. The trend toward socialism of one type or another is universal and irresistible. Given peace, we may hope to cope with the unexpected and unpleasant features of this drift: the draconian nature of thought control in the Communist countries, the difficulty everywhere of preserving individual liberty as state control of the economy grows, the bureaucratic rigidity which develops in both the centralized states and the big corporations. Obviously private enterprise could still play a useful role within the confines of state planning, and some way must be found effectively to affirm absolute freedom of opinion against the state, whatever its form. These are the problems of the socialist future, but that it is the future may be seen even in this country, the stronghold of private capitalism. The Gallup poll, for example, just asked which party would do the best job of keeping the country prosperous. It found, even after three years of Republican prosperity, that a slight majority (39% Democrats, 37% Republicans) of the voters still believes the New Dealish Democrats are a better bet for prosperity than the "free enterprise" Republicans. Even in America, where private capitalism can claim credit for energizing a century and a half of tremendous development and striking improvement in mass living standards, a majority of the voters is still nervous about possible crises and doesn't trust the free market and the profit system to cope with them.

Add Faceless Informers

In a local Washington radio (WRC) broadcast November 7, Earl Godwin said he had just had an interview with J. Edgar Hoover and that the FBI would ask to be relieved of its responsibility in loyalty-security cases if the courts or Congress finally determined that its informants could not be kept confidential.

Latest newspaper to join the campaign against the faceless informer is (three guesses) the *Chicago Tribune*. Suit was filed in Federal district court in Chicago this month on behalf of Douglas Stephens, a former army sergeant given a dishonorable discharge by an Army security field board for misconduct as a POW.

The field board's verdict is attacked as the fruit of an "unconstitutional star chamber" proceeding on the ground that Army security officials were allowed to keep confidential the identity of their informers.

Counsel was obtained for Stephens and the suit filed as the result of an expose in the *Chicago Tribune* Sunday magazine of October 9, asking "Is this American justice?" The Tribune's protege, according to its story, "sometimes read the Red newspaper, but only for sports." This seems breath-takingly broad-minded for Col. McCormick's old paper.

Wallace Reappears: The nonsense being talked by both political parties about rigid farm supports will be hit by Henry Wallace tomorrow (Nov. 15) in a speech before the Iowa Farm Bureau Federation in Des Moines, his first public address in years. . . . **Puzzler:** The brief filed by the government in the Harvey O'Connor case now awaiting decision in Federal district court here does not even mention the First Amendment, but confines itself to jurisdictional, procedural and technical issues. . . . **Gruenther for President?** Fantastic as it may sound, some rightist circles here are plugging Gen. Alfred M. Gruenther, NATO chief, as a dark horse Republican candidate for '56, saying he is no more obscure than was Willkie six months before his nomination. One obstacle is that Gruenther is a Catholic. Adelbert Weinstein, military correspondent of the influential *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, wrote in an interview with Gruenther last summer that the latter reminded him of a Jesuit priest with whom Weinstein had been in a POW camp. Weinstein said he was therefore not surprised to hear from Gruenther that he had thought of becoming a priest before deciding on West Point. . . . **Justice Douglas** is understandably miffed because the State Department this year as in past years is completely uninterested in hearing what he observed abroad, this past summer, in the Soviet Union. . . **Sign of the Times:** Both the New York *Herald-Tribune* and Hearst's *Mirror* urged a "yes" vote for an additional low cost public housing State bond issue in last week's New York election, something they would never have done 20 years ago. . . .

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Crowded Court Week: Matusow, Scales, Toth and Some Hopeful Items

Can The Law Accept the Doctrine That The End Justifies The Means?

Matusow—Some odd moral standards are implied by the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals in upholding the conviction of Clinton E. Jencks for false statement in a non-Communist affidavit despite the recantation of Harvey Matusow. "The government," the court said, "is frequently compelled to look to the criminal element including accomplices for its witnesses. The enforcement of the criminal laws would be rendered impotent if convictions should be set aside merely because one of such witnesses essays to repudiate his testimony when it seems profitable to do so." But what the Court is really saying is that an informer's word is reliable when he is paid by the government but becomes unreliable when he recants and publishes a book indirectly financed by a trade union benefiting from the recantation. Why is the testimony held tainted by one kind of payment but not by the other? The Court also makes a revealing comment on a vital contradiction in testimony. Matusow, recanting, testified, "I told the FBI agent I didn't want to testify in the Jencks trial. I didn't feel my testimony was honest." The FBI agent denied that Matusow said this. The Court accepted the denial but added a footnote saying, "Moreover, other testimony given by Matusow gave substance to the assumption that, *what he meant when he stated to the agent that he did not feel that his testimony was honest*, was that it was not honest for him to associate intimately with appellant and then testify as to what transpired between the two." The italics are added to show that the Court, after accepting the FBI agent's denial, turns around and accepts Matusow's version but interprets it differently. Even if the Court's interpretation is correct, is it honest to associate intimately with a man and then exploit this to give testimony for pay against him? Does it not violate the innermost essence of law to accept the premise that the end justifies the means?

Scales—The first Circuit Court opinion upholding a conviction under the membership clause of the Smith Act was handed down November 7 in Baltimore by a unanimous Fourth Circuit bench speaking through Chief Judge Parker. The defendant was Junius Irving Scales, chairman of the Communist party in North and South Carolina, an area in which revolution is somewhat less than imminent. The opinion recalls those of the criminal syndicalism cases in the early twenties. The "clear and present danger" rule is discarded. Membership is equated with conspiracy, and given the same sinister overtones. The most interesting part of the opinion is its handling of Section 4 (f) of the Subversive Activities Control Act of 1950 which says "Neither the holding of office nor membership in any Communist organization shall constitute per se a violation . . . of this section or of any other criminal statute." The Court met this by splitting a fine Talmudic hair. "In other words," Judge Parker ruled, "mere membership in the party is not a crime. Membership with knowledge of the criminal purpose of the organization remains a crime." The purpose of Section 4 (f), of course, was to get around the plea that to force a Communist to register under the Subversive Activities Control Act was to require him to incriminate himself. But if Section 4 (f) is no more than Judge Parker says it is, how can registration be reconciled with the Fifth amendment? At the very least it provides a vital link (membership) in the chain of incriminatory proof. This is the question on which the Supreme Court hears argument this week in the Communist Party appeal against the order requiring it to register.

Toth—The law, too, has its relativity. As seen from Korea, a U.S. airman killed "one of us gooks" and got off scotfree on a technicality. As seen from the U.S.A., Justice Black's decision freeing Robert W. Toth puts some curb on a military power which has been growing at an alarming rate, and provides indication that on some issues at least Harlan and Clark may vote on the liberal side. As a result of the Court's 6-3 decision that a soldier once discharged may not be tried by court martial, three returned "turncoat" POW's from Korea were set free next day by a Federal judge in San Francisco. This, too, is welcome. For months a truce was held up while we protested that Chinese Communist soldiers would be faced with political reprisals on their return home. Since then a series of savage Army trials, like that in which Major Alley has just been sentenced to 10 years at hard labor, raises the suspicion that in many cases we are doing the same thing.

Hopeful—The Supreme Court's refusal to hear an appeal from the Wisconsin Supreme Court decision holding that tenants of a *Federal* housing project may not be required to sign a loyalty oath. . . . The Court's unanimous orders striking down segregation in public recreational facilities. . . . The courageous decision of Virginia's highest state court striking down plans to get around the anti-segregation rule by public financing of private segregated schools. . . . The District Court decision here throwing out the contempt indictment of Bernhard Deutch, a physics student who refused to name others before the House Un-American Activities Committee. . . . And the suspension by Judge Morris of sentence for contempt against Lawrence Baker Arguimbau who likewise declined on moral grounds to "name names" for McCarthy.

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